

Executive Summary

LAKE FIVE FAS ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Draft Environmental Assessment

February 14, 2005

Lake Five is a 235-acre lake located off of Highway 2 between Columbia Falls and West Glacier (Township 31 N, Range 19 W, Section 9) in Flathead County. This lake currently has no public access for boat launching. Public access for shore fishing was historically available at the following two locations:

- a. The railroad right of way between the railroad tracks and the lake. Due to liability concerns, the railroad has closed this access.
- b. A parcel on the east shore between the lakeshore and the county road. The ownership of this parcel is unclear. In addition, the site is steep, with a 10-foot drop, making it unsuitable for boat access, and can only be negotiated by able-bodied people.

The lake contains brook trout, kokanee salmon, yellow perch, and largemouth bass. Current fishing pressure is 496 fishing days annually. The fishing on this lake has been limited by the lack of public access.

In January of 2003 a woman, wishing to honor her son who had recently passed away, approached Fish, Wildlife & Parks. In honor of her son, she wished to provide a fishing access site for public use. Region One had identified Lake Five as a high priority for public access. During the same time frame, landowners who have property on Lake Five, approached FWP. They wished to complete a sale with the Department to provide public access on the site, as this was a request of their late father. With this confluence of desires, they completed a bargain sale/purchase of ten acres on Lake Five and donated the land, along with funds for future maintenance of the site, to the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation. The intent of the donation is that a fishing access site, to be known as Paul's Fishing Access Site, be developed on the lake and made available to the public. Development will be done using state and federal funds. A trust fund will be set up through the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation to provide a portion of the annual maintenance of this site.

A preliminary plan and draft environmental assessment (EA) have been developed, and a public process established in order for the public to be able to comment on the project. The draft EA will be placed on the FWP web site. A hard copy will be mailed upon request. Contact Nancy Ivy at Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901, (406) 751-4579 or e-mail to

nivy@mt.gov. There will be a 30-day public comment period to provide information and take comment.

An open house will be held on March 8, 2005, between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the Hungry Horse Ranger District office, 8975 Hwy 2 East, Hungry Horse, Montana, to take comment. The comment period will take place from February 14 to March 18, 2005, with a final decision being made after the public comment period. Written comment can be mailed to Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901, or e-mailed to mawatkins@mt.gov.

The alternatives considered in the draft EA are:

Alternative I: No Action

FWP would not accept the donation of ten acres on Lake Five and would not develop a fishing access site on the property. The funds donated for the purchase and management of the property would be returned.

This alternative would have the least environmental impacts, as the site would not be developed for public recreation. However, this alternative would continue to preclude public recreational access to Lake Five, and enforcement would continue to be limited due to the lack of public access.

Alternative II: Minimal Development

In this alternative FWP would accept the donation of ten acres on Lake Five and would develop a fishing access site on the property; however, the level of development would be reduced. No host pad would be installed, and the roads would be gravel instead of paved.

This alternative would have greater environmental and social impact for the following reasons:

1. Gravel roads may cause additional dust problems on the lake and for adjacent neighbors. While the amount of dust on the lake would be minimal, and runoff issues could be mitigated through proper design, more dust would be raised than would be if the roads were paved. In addition, while the cost of putting in gravel roads is less, continued maintenance of the road system adds additional operations cost for grading and dust control.
2. With public access on Lake Five there will be increased patrol from the Enforcement Division, which may help with some concerns expressed by the public regarding the use of jet skis and water skiing.
3. The removal of the host pad from the project would leave less of a footprint of disturbance on the site; however, removal of the host pad also removes one mechanism for site control. There would be no staff available to open and shut the gate, and no on-site presence to reduce late night partying or to contact enforcement when issues arise. While this alternative would

eliminate operational costs of the host pad (costs for water, power, and telephone), it would increase costs associated with enforcement and vandalism. In addition, without an on-site presence, there will be more social impacts to adjacent neighbors.

Alternative III: Preferred Alternative

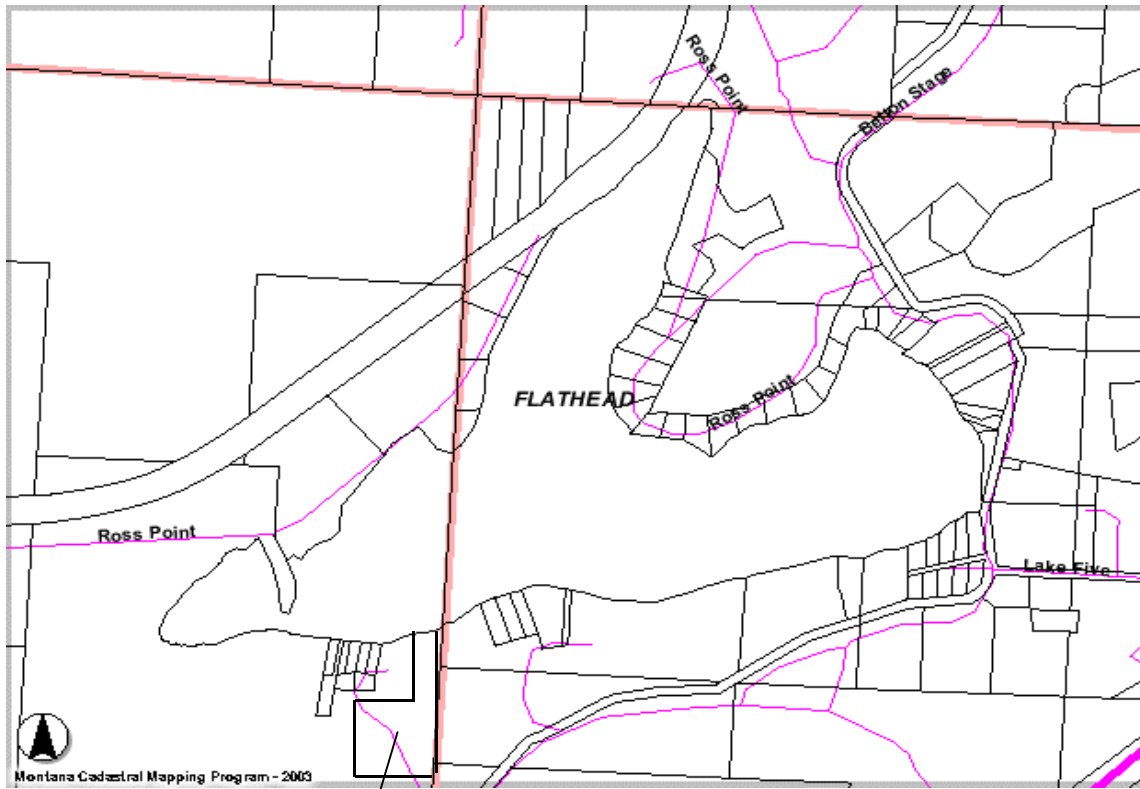
In this alternative FWP would construct a day-use boat access area for 7 vehicle and trailer combinations, and 16 parking sites for individual cars. Development would include a paved entrance road, parking, a vault toilet, boat ramp, signs and gates, and a host pad. All the facilities, with the exception of the host pad, will be developed in the primary development project. The host pad will be completed after proper permitting and zoning is completed, and will include power, a well, and a septic system. The purpose of having a host on-site is to reduce impacts to other people adjacent to the property and elsewhere on the lake by closing the site at night, providing maintenance services, and providing someone to contact enforcement if problems occur on the site.

This alternative is considered to have lesser social and environmental impacts than Alternative II, but more than Alternative I. The footprint of disturbance will be greater, but with paving, dust will not be an issue, and with an on-site presence, vandalism and late night disturbances will be greatly decreased. FWP has found hosts to be the most effective deterrent to late night parties and other activities that would impact neighbors to the property. The property would be open to public use from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. daily during the summer, with winter hours being adjusted according to the daylight schedule.

The increase in enforcement presence will be available with either Alternative II or III.

This project has been designed to provide public access, while protecting the resources. In addition, a great deal of consideration has been given to having as little impact on other lake property owners as possible, while still providing adequate public access. Advantages and disadvantages of the three options are:

Alternative I No Action	Alternative II Limited Development	Alternative III Preferred Alternative
<p>ADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No disturbance of currently undisturbed land. ◆ No impacts to neighbors. ◆ No increased use on the lake. • Least environmental impacts. • Least social impacts. <p>DISADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No public access on Lake Five. ◆ No increased water safety patrols due to public access. 	<p>ADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides public access on Lake Five. ◆ Increased water safety patrols. <p>DISADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravel road will mean more dust for adjacent neighbors or possibly on lake. • No host pad will mean increased impacts on adjacent neighbors from late night disturbances. • Increased costs for vandalism repair, dust control, and maintenance. • Most environmental impacts. • Most social impacts. 	<p>ADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides public access on Lake Five. ◆ Increased water safety patrols. • Host pad will reduce late night disturbances and vandalism, and will provide for routine maintenance at the site. • Paved roads will decrease dust and maintenance. • Less environmental impacts than Alternative II. • Less social impacts than Alternative II. <p>DISADVANTAGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More environmental impacts than Alternative I. • More social impacts than Alternative I. • More operational costs for host pad (water, sewer, power, phone).



**Potential
access site**

